

Invitation: Book talk and signing by Ariel Sabar, author of *My Father's Paradise*

1 message

KRG-US <us@krg.org>

To: us@krg.org

Mon, Jan 4, 2010 at 2:07 PM

Qubad J. Talabany,

Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government to the U.S.

Cordially invites you to a book talk and signing by

Ariel Sabar, author of

My Father's Paradise: A Son's Search for his Jewish Past in Kurdish Iraq

In this award-winning debut book, Ariel travels with his father, Yona Sabar to his father's homeland in Iraqi Kurdistan. Sabar brings to life the ancient town of Zakho, telling his family's story and discovering their place in the Sephardic Jews' millennia-long survival in Islamic lands. A sweeping saga of Middle-Eastern history, *My Father's Paradise* is also an intimate story of tolerance and hope in an Iraq very different from the one in the headlines today.

Wednesday, 13 January 2010

5:30-7:30pm

Kurdistan Regional Government - Iraq

1532 16th St., NW

Washington, DC 20036

Copies of *My Father's Paradise* will be available for purchase at the event.

MSD/CES/REGISTRATION UNIT
2010 NOV - 1 PM 1:57

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1532 16th St., NW
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Ariel Sabar covered the 2008 U.S. presidential campaigns for the *Christian Science Monitor* and is an award-winning former staff writer for the *Baltimore Sun* and the *Providence (RI) Journal*. His work has also appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Times Sunday Magazine*, *The Washington Monthly*, *Mother Jones*, *Moment*, *Christianity Today* and other publications. He lives with his wife and two children in Washington, D.C. *My Father's Paradise*, his first book, won the National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography and was a finalist for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize.

Copies of *My Father's Paradise* will be available for purchase at the event.

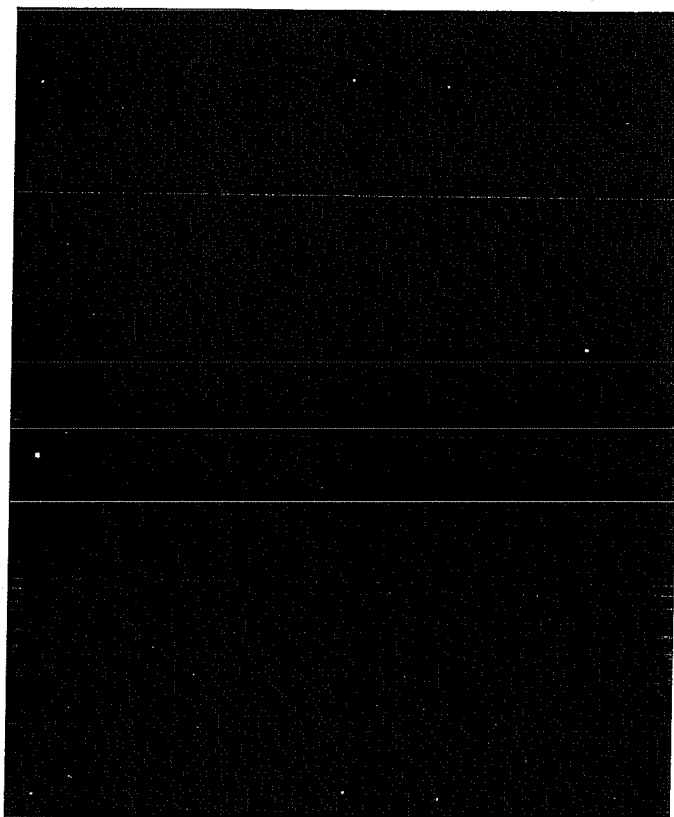
Please RSVP by 11 January 2010

Email us@krg.org OR call 202.797.7575

Winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography

MY FATHER'S PARADISE

A Son's Search for his Family's Past
by Ariel Sabar



Ariel Sabar's father, Yona, was born to an illiterate mother in a mud hut in the remote Kurdish region of Iraq. Protected by towering mountains, the Jews of Zakho dwelt peacefully among Muslims and Christians for hundreds of years. Rugged lumberjacks and humble peddlers, self-made mystics and gifted storytellers, the members of this Lost Tribe of Israel were so isolated that they still spoke Aramaic, the language of Jesus. But in the late 1940s, the outside world would come crashing in. Yona Sabar would be the last boy bar mitzvah in Zakho.

Young Yona and his family joined the mass exodus of 120,000 Jews from Iraq — one of the largest peacetime airlifts in history. In Israel, Kurdish Jews struggled against poverty and bigotry, watching helplessly as their ancient culture and language faded into oblivion. Yona worked his way through night high school in Jerusalem and then, against great odds, was admitted to Yale University, where he devoted himself to the rescue of his people's vanishing traditions. Now an esteemed professor at UCLA, Yona is one of the world's most sought-after experts on Aramaic.

Growing up in 1980s Los Angeles, Ariel wanted nothing to do with his father's strange immigrant heritage. Until he had a son of his own. In this award-winning debut book, Ariel travels with Yona to war-torn Iraq in a quest for roots and reconciliation. A sweeping saga of Middle-Eastern history, *My Father's Paradise* is also an intimate story of tolerance and hope in an Iraq very different from the one in the headlines today.

■ PRESS RELEASES

KRP.org 05:38:22 30 Jan. 2010

President Barzani concludes successful Washington visit

Washington DC, US (KRP.org) – Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani held a series of important meetings this week in Washington, DC, where he met with President Obama and other senior US officials



The President kicked off a successful week of high-level meetings with US officials, with a visit to the White House where he was hosted by US President Barack Obama in the Oval Office.

During the meeting, President Obama reiterated US support for the Iraqi Constitution and the democratic process in Iraq, stressing that the US would remain strongly committed to the security and prosperity of the Kurdistan Region within a federal Iraq.

During his meeting with President Obama, President Barzani highlighted the significance of Iraq's forthcoming elections on March 7th and reaffirmed the Kurdistan Region's commitment to a federal, democratic and pluralistic Iraq. Moreover, he emphasized the importance for a strategic and long-term US engagement with Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. In response, President Obama reaffirmed strong US support for and engagement with the Kurdistan Region and lauded the contribution of the KRG to Iraq's development.

The President also held a separate meeting with US Vice President Biden in which they discussed a number of issues including implementation of Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution, and the obstacles in the way, as well as disagreements between Erbil and Baghdad. The two stressed the importance of participation in the political process by all sides in Iraq.

President Barzani also held important meetings with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, as well as senior US Senators John McCain, Joseph Lieberman, Lindsey Graham, and John Kerry. During these meetings, Secretary of State Clinton repeated earlier assurances that the US would support a federal and autonomous Kurdistan Region in Iraq and not abandon Iraq.

In addition to these meetings, President Barzani gave an important speech at the

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in Kurdistan Region](#)

Basan Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institute, a Washington-based think tank. The talk centered on the upcoming elections in Iraq, the future U.S. role in helping Iraq, and the relationship between the Kurdistan Region and Baghdad. President Barzani noted that he is very pleased with his meetings with the U.S. officials and described them as both productive and fruitful. "We have received pledges in all our meetings with US officials that they will continue their support for Iraq and the Kurdistan Region," said the President.

President Barzani went on to state in regards to the upcoming elections that, "We are committed to the political process in Iraq and together with our partners in Iraq we are determined to overcome our problems, as long as Iraq abides by its Constitution. However, we are not prepared to live in a dictatorship." He characterized these elections as critical for the future of Iraq.

Answering a question on the future status of Kirkuk, President Barzani said, "Kirkuk has a Kurdistan identity according to all historical and geographical records. Article-140 of the Iraqi Constitution provides the best solution to resolve the status of this city. We don't see any alternatives to Article-140 as viable solutions to this problem and they are only attempts to evade a real and lasting solution. We want to leave this decision to the people of Kirkuk themselves, as stipulated in Article-140. Despite this, we are willing to show flexibility on power-sharing in the city, as we have in the past."

Following a question on disputes between Erbil and Baghdad on oil and gas contracts, President Barzani said that the dispute is on revenue sharing from oil and gas sales. "We currently have a 17% share of Iraq's budget, which we believe is less than what the Kurdistan Region deserves. Having said this, we have agreed to this share until a fair and accurate census is held in Iraq.

The President also visited the International Institute for Strategic Studies, met with several influential journalists, and attended a reception for the Kurdish community at the Kurdistan Region Government's office and for diplomats in Washington.

In the last day of his visit to Washington D.C., President Barzani met with a number of representatives of the Iraqi Christian community in the United States. In this round-table meeting, a number of issues of concern to the Christian community in Iraq were discussed.

During his stay in Washington D.C, President Barzani also met a number of retired US generals in which he extended his appreciation for the United States' sacrifices in Iraq and for its commitment to help the federal government and the KRG. He restated that the leadership of the Kurdistan Region stands ready to continue playing a constructive role in building a secure, constitutional and prosperous Iraq.

President Barzani's delegation included Nechirvan Barzani, Masrour Barzani, Director of Security and Intelligence in the Kurdistan Region, Fuad Hussein, Chief of Staff to the President, Ashti Hawrami, the KRG Natural Resources Minister, Herish Muharam, head of KRG Investment Board, Falah Mustafa, head of KRG Foreign Relations, and Qubad Talabani, KRG Representative to the USA.

[Click here to see more photos of the visit](#)

(HA)

"Regional Stability in Iraq: A Look at Kurdistan" with Qubad Talabani



(<http://ypfp.org/>)

YPFP is pleased to host a discussion with **Qubad Talabani** of the Kurdistan Regional Government. Mr. Talabani will discuss his thoughts on the impact of the July regional parliamentary elections on the political and economic development of Kurdistan and Iraq overall. He will also touch upon what makes Kurdistan a success story in the Middle East and what Kurdistan has to offer as an emerging democracy in the heart of the Middle East to promote peace and stability in the region.

Start Time: February 3, 2010
End Time: February 3, 2010
Speaker(s): Qubad Talabani - Representative of Kurdistan Govern Regional Governr U.S.

Event Fees: none

This event will take place on **Wednesday, February 3, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. in Washington, DC** and is open to YPFP Affiliate and General Members. To register, log-in to your [YPFP account \(http://ypfp.org/\)](http://ypfp.org/) and sign-up under the event listing.

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**Qubad Talabani**, as Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to the United States, works closely with the U.S. Government, the media and research institutions providing critical analysis and up-to-date information on Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

**\*\*NOTE:** Members who wish to register after the deadline to do so should email [events@ypfp.org](mailto:events@ypfp.org) (<mailto:events@ypfp.org>) to see if there is space available.

After Operation Iraqi Freedom (Spring 2003), he served a year as Senior Foreign Relations officer for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (one of the leading Kurdish political parties in Iraq), operating mainly out of Baghdad and Sulaimania. There, he worked closely with the U.S.-led Coalition Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), and was PUK's top liaison to the Coalition after it became the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and to US forces in Iraq. Mr. Talabani was also a key negotiator in drafting the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), Iraq's first post-Saddam constitution.

During the period 2001 - 2003, Mr. Talabani served first as a Special Assistant to the then PUK Representative in Washington and then later he served as the Deputy PUK Representative in Washington D.C. Mr. Talabani is frequently interviewed by the popular press and other publications. He has appeared numerous times to discuss Kurdish and Iraqi issues on major television networks including: CNN, BBC, FOX News, and other American and

international networks.

Mr. Talabani's family has been involved in Kurdish politics for decades. His father, Jalal Talabani, is the President of the Republic of Iraq and Secretary General of the PUK.

Mr. Talabani studied in London and holds a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering.

He lives with his wife Sherri Kraham in Washington, D.C.



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## Qorvis FARA submission

1 message

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Renate Geerlings <rgeerlings@qorvis.com>

Wed, Feb 17, 2010 at 1:00 PM

To: farakrg@gmail.com

Hello Mike and Diane,

We released this statement last night. From now on I will forward whatever we send out.

Thanks,

Renate

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region of Iraq Concludes Visit to UAE**

*Officials Discussed Future Trade Conference and Establishing a UAE Consulate in Erbil*

DUBAI, UAE, 16 February 2010 – Prime Minister Dr. Barham Salih has completed a four-day visit to the United Arab Emirates, where he met Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates. He also met several ministers and senior officials to discuss trade and political relations.

Dr Salih's visit builds on the KRG's exchanges and visits over the past few years, including meetings with the leaders of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. Dr. Salih and Sheikh Maktoum discussed ways to promote bilateral ties between the Kurdistan Region and the UAE. Sheikh Maktoum commended the Kurdistan Region for its role in helping to improve relations between the UAE and Iraq. Mr. Abdul Aziz Al-Ghurair, Speaker of the UAE's Federal National Council, was also at the meeting.

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Dr. Salih asked the UAE's leadership to strengthen economic cooperation with the Kurdistan Region, and support efforts by Kurdistan companies to stimulate trade. He added that the UAE's experience in management and career development could be of particular value to the KRG and expressed his wish for UAE assistance in development and administrative reform.

Prime Minister Salih, accompanied by a KRG delegation, also met the UAE's Finance Minister, Foreign Minister, the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Commander of the armed forces, the Ruler of Sharjah, and other senior UAE officials. Dr. Salih was accompanied by KRG Interior



Minister Karim Sinjari, Chairman of the Investment Board Herish Muharram, and several businessmen from the Kurdistan Region.

The delegation visited the headquarters of the Emirates National Oil Company (ENOC), where Chief Executive Mr. Saeed Abdullah Khoury briefed Dr. Salih and the delegation about ENOC's structure and services.

The KRG Prime Minister was also received by Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Minister of Finance, to discuss trade promotion and economic cooperation. The KRG already has good trade ties with the UAE, which it hopes to strengthen further with this visit. In 2007, several KRG ministers participated in the Kurdistan of Iraq – UAE Business Exchange Conference in Dubai, which attracted delegates from over 600 companies.

Prime Minister Salih and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE's Foreign Minister, discussed mechanisms for creating a suitable environment for investment and capital flows. Sheikh Al Nahyan informed Dr. Salih of the UAE's plan to send a delegation of high-ranking officials and businessmen to the Kurdistan Region, building on the strong relationship that has already developed between the Region and the UAE.

The delegation met General Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE armed forces. The two sides discussed how to strengthen relations between the UAE and Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, in the fields of politics, economics, and education - particularly in relation to university and graduate studies. They discussed the possibility of convening another conference on trade and investment.

The KRG delegation met Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah, Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Bin Sultan al Qasimi, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah, and Mr. Abdullah Ibrahim Al Shehhi Azwai, Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq. Mr. Hussein Sadeq, Iraq's Consul General in Dubai, accompanied the delegation.

Contact: Renate Geerlings

[rgeerlings@qorvis.com](mailto:rgeerlings@qorvis.com)

202 255 2744

This has been distributed by Qorvis Communications, LLC on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government. More information is available at the US Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Renate Geerlings

Qorvis Communications

1201 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 600, Washington D.C., 20036

T: 202.683.3133 M: 202.255.2744 F: 202.496.1300

Email: [rgeerlings@qorvis.com](mailto:rgeerlings@qorvis.com)

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## PRESS RELEASE: Kurdistan Region of Iraq Applauds House Resolution Calling for Protection of Religious Minorities

1 message

KRG-US <us@krg.org>  
To: us@krg.org

Thu, Feb 25, 2010 at 10:19 AM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

### Kurdistan Region of Iraq Applauds House Resolution Calling for Protection of Religious Minorities

*Legislation Reinforces Need for the Implementation of Iraqi Constitution Article 140*

WASHINGTON, 24 February 2010 – The Representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (KRG) to the United States today expressed support for the passage of H. Res. 944, a resolution introduced by Rep. Gary C. Peters (D-MI) calling for steps to be taken to protect religious minorities in Iraq. The Kurdistan Region is home to a diverse collection of ethnic and religious groups—including Chaldeans, Syriacs, Assyrians, and other Christians, Sabeen Mandeans, and Yazidis, Turkomans and Arabs. Consistent with requests made by the resolution, the KRG has made repeated calls for full adherence to the federal constitution, which has provisions designed to protect these groups.

"The resolution introduced by Congressman Peters reinforces the need for swift implementation of Article 140 of Iraq's federal constitution, which will put to rest conflicts over Iraq's disputed territories—issues that have indirectly led to the neglect, and at times, oppression of religious minorities in these areas," said Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's representative in the U.S.

The disputed territory issue, if left unresolved, has the potential to contribute to the degeneration of the situation in Iraq. As stated in the House resolution, these minority groups "...are caught in the middle of this struggle for control and have been targeted for abuses and discrimination as a result." Article 140 of the federal constitution was written and approved to solve this situation, as it calls for a referendum by the people within the disputed territories to determine their own

destinies. Since the approval of the federal constitution, the KRG has worked to implement Article 140.

In his official floor statement during debate on the resolution today, Congressman Gary C. Peters said: "This resolution calls upon the combined efforts of the United States Government and United Nations to ask the Iraqi Government to protect religious minorities by encouraging free and fair elections, training Iraqi security forces and providing safe places to worship."

###

Contact:

**Tom Squitieri, KRG US liaison office**

**Phone: +1-202-257-7984**

**Email: [tom.squitieri@krg.org](mailto:tom.squitieri@krg.org)**

*The Kurdistan Regional Government Liaison Office – U.S.A. is registered as an agent of the Kurdistan Regional Government under 22 U.S.C. § 611 et seq*

MSD/CES/REGISTRATION UNIT  
2010 NOV -1 PM 2:12



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE --

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Phone: +1-202-257-7984

Email: [tom.squitieri@krg.org](mailto:tom.squitieri@krg.org)

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1532 16th STREET, N.W. ♦ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036 USA

TEL: + 1 202 797 7575 ♦ [WWW.KRG.ORG](http://WWW.KRG.ORG)

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## PRESS RELEASE: Kurdistan Regional Government Statement on the Anniversary of the Halabja Massacre

1 message

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KRG-US <us@krg.org>

Tue, Mar 16, 2010 at 10:37 AM

To: us@krg.org

### KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE HALABJA MASSACRE

WASHINGTON, 16 March 2010 – *The Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq's Representative to the United States, Qubad J. Talabani, released the following statement today in commemoration of the anniversary of the chemical gas attacks against Kurdish civilians in the town of Halabja in 1988:*

On this, the 22nd anniversary of the Genocide of Halabja – which took the lives of more than 5,000 Kurdish civilians, including women and children – the people of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq commemorate those innocents lost during this horrific event, as well as the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish lives taken by the atrocities committed against them during the genocidal regime of Saddam Hussein. We also take this opportunity to give thanks to American military forces and to the United States for liberating Iraq and for their continued support for the people of Kurdistan as we seek to contribute to the realization of a stable, federal and democratic Iraq.

The Halabja anniversary is not, however, just a time for the people of the Kurdistan Region to look back. It is a time for us to heal, to seek closure and to look forward. This year in particular represents a singular confluence of what is now behind us, with the execution of Ali Hassan al Majid, or "Chemical Ali" – and what is ahead – with Iraq's recent parliamentary elections, which will determine the country's future. The people of Iraqi Kurdistan remain determined in this time. The justice brought to Chemical Ali did not bring rejoicing as much as it did a sober acknowledgment, like with each constitutionally-guaranteed vote we cast, that we are taking real steps to ensure the Iraqi government does not inflict the types of crimes seen by Saddam Hussein's regime ever again against anyone. The people of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will never forget Halabja.

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Contact: Tom Squitieri at the KRG-US, 202 821 1854

Kurdistan Regional Government

Representation to the United States

1532 16th St., NW | Washington, DC 20036

(Tel) + 1 202 797 7575 | (Fax) + 1 202 821 1870 | [www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org)

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**BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL:** Exempt from FOIA please contact KRG-US concerning any request to release any document.



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# # #

Contact: Tom Squitieri at the KRG-US, 202 821 1854





## Middle East Studies | Events

In September 2009, Middle East Studies program launched Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff Family Charitable Funds sponsored Lecture Series.

### FUTURE EVENTS:

September 15, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**  
by Dr. Robert Malley of International Crisis Group

September 22, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**  
by Mr. Charles Hill, the author of the newly released "Grand Strategies: Literature, Statecraft and World Order", a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a lecturer in International Studies at Yale University

### PAST EVENTS:

#### Spring 2010

February 17, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**

**"Israel-Palestine: The Inevitable Bi-National State"**

by Meron Benvenisti, Ph.D.; author, activist and former deputy Mayor of Jerusalem. For a summary of this lecture please [click here](#).

February 24, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**

**"Why the Peace Process Will Never Bring Peace"**

by Elliott Abrams, former Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director on the National Security Council for Near East and North African Affairs; currently Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. For a summary of this lecture please [click here](#).

March 3, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**

**"Kurdistan and Iraq: The National Elections and Beyond"**

by Qubad Talabani, the representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in the United States. For a summary of this lecture please [click here](#).

March 10, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**

**"Obama's War: Afghanistan, Pakistan and Al Qaeda"**

by Bruce Riedel, former CIA Officer and Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director on Near East Affairs on the National Security Council; currently Senior Fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institution. For a summary of this lecture please [click here](#).

March 24, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**

**"Perplexed Clerics: Clerical Politics in Post-Election Iran"**

by Mr. Mehdi Khalaji, Visiting Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. This event was cosponsored by Strategic Studies and Middle East Studies programs and was the second installment in a three part speaker series on Iran. For a summary of this lecture please [click here](#).

March 31, 2010 - **Brownbag Lecture**

"Kurdistan and Iraq: The National Elections and Beyond"  
Qubad Talabani  
3/3/2010

We are on the eve of a historic election – one that is more important than the one we had in 2005. Elections were different in 2005: there was something called the closed list system whereby you only voted for the slate, which came with a set of candidates. This time it's an open list system, which means you vote for lists as well as for specific people. This makes for more accountable and competitive elections.

In 2005, Shiite parties and forces united under the United Iraqi Alliance, and the Kurdish alliance held together major forces in the region. Sunni Arabs boycotted the elections in 2005. This time we're expecting much broader participation. People learned that boycotting the political process hindered the political process. The Constitution was ratified without a key component of the country having a say.

Last time there was one big Shiite list but this time there's much more competition, regionally and nationally. There is intense competition in Kurdistan. Sometimes it boils over in regrettable incidents. Several areas like Al Anbar, Mosul, Salaheddin and Baghdad are expected to have healthy participation.

In these elections, the stakes are very high. This raises tensions, insecurities and the process will appear to be messy. So many people are competing for seats of power, so you're bound to get a messy process. We are hoping the process will be relatively smooth. There will be irregularities and complaints of fraud and intimidation. This is normal in a country that has been ruled by intimidation for a long time. But ultimately we are hoping to form a good government in Baghdad that could eliminate corruption and address issues that are crucial for the country's future.

We are hoping and expecting a good outcome for Kurdish representation. The Kurds would be happy with 60 representatives although it's a reduction in percentage compared to the last election. In 2005, the Sunni Arab boycott benefited the Kurds. This time that will change.

Iraq is a binational state. Other nationalities would also say it's multinational. Even Saddam recognized that Iraq is made up of Arab and Kurdish nations. We say Iraq is not an Arab country – the Arab peoples of Iraq are part of the Arab nation. Everything is complicated in Iraq.

Iraq as a state can belong to all despite nationalities and allegiances. The major unifying element is how the resources will be managed. If resources can be managed well, oil sales revenues redistributed equitably, Iraq has huge potential. People will start to feel the country is theirs. Nationalism is a defensive ideology. You become extreme and distrustful. But when you start to benefit from the state, that changes. We hope to see an efficient, effective system of redistribution of oil wealth that is not dependent on a single person.

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## Flying the Flag

By Marisa M. Kashino

A former auto mechanic enlists the aid of savvy DC lobbyists and sympathetic Washington politicians on behalf of his homeland, which just happens to be an oil-rich part of war-torn Iraq.

The townhouse at 1532 16th Street—a mile north of the White House—is owned and operated by a foreign government. It has the crystal chandeliers and glossy marble floors typical of an embassy. But it isn't one.

And though his job is to protect his government's interests in Washington, the man who occupies the sprawling office on the second floor is not an ambassador. He's a lobbyist.

Qubad Talabani shies away from that word. His formal title is US representative of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq, which controls Iraq's northern tip and frequently clashes with the central government in Baghdad. Iraqi Kurdistan flies its own flag and has its own parliament and armed forces, but it's not its own country—it operates as a state within a state. Thus, an official lobbyist is about as close as the region can get to having an ambassador to the United States.

Since taking on the role in 2006, Talabani has pieced together a broad campaign to strengthen Washington's relationship with the Kurds—the largest ethnic group in Iraq after the Arabs. Throughout their centuries-long history in the region, the Kurds have survived constant persecution, most notably Saddam Hussein's attempt in the late 1980s to exterminate them.

The inauguration of President Barack Obama brought about a renewed sense of urgency for Talabani. Now that the United States has set a deadline for withdrawing from Iraq, Talabani needs to shore up American support for Kurdistan as it faces off with Baghdad over land and oil.

The situation could become bloody. "In ten years or less, one could imagine armed conflict," says Robert Olson, a history professor at the University of Kentucky who specializes in Kurdish issues.

The tension between Baghdad and Iraqi Kurdistan is apparent in DC. Baghdad's man in Washington, Iraqi ambassador Samir Sumaida'ie, isn't happy about Talabani. He says the Iraqi constitution asserts that the central government has exclusive authority over diplomatic and foreign relations: "So opening a separate representative office by the KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] which engages in political activity is clearly contrary to the letter and the spirit of the constitution. Moreover, it is unnecessary since the region is well represented in the federal government."

Both Sumaida'ie and Talabani downplay the risk of a full-blown civil war between Arab and Kurdish Iraqis. Still, Talabani stresses that the brutality visited on Kurds in the past makes forming alliances within the US government critical. After all, it was just two decades ago that Saddam killed as many as 150,000 Kurds and forced at least a million from areas such as the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. At the time, the Kurds had few friends in Washington to stand up for them.

Neighboring Turkey, Iran, and Syria—all of which have their own Kurdish populations—also feel threatened by the prospect of Iraqi Kurds gaining too much power and inspiring uprisings among the Kurds in their countries. Iraqi Kurds are the only ones who have established their own government and autonomous region, though most Kurds in all four countries consider themselves part of a larger Kurdistan.

Talabani isn't working alone. In addition to his own advocacy, he relies on some of Washington's most prominent lobbying and consulting shops. Iraqi Kurdistan has paid its lobbyists more than \$4.6 million since 2007. Iraq's central government spent \$2.7 million on outside representation in 2009, but the work was limited to helping Baghdad restructure its external debt and, unlike Kurdistan's efforts, didn't include political advocacy.

More than 500 foreign governments, political parties, businesses, and other interests lobby in Washington, but they generate only a sliver of lobby-firm earnings. The big money comes from domestic clients such as Exxon Mobil, which spent \$27.4 million on lobbying in 2009, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

For all his hired help, Talabani emphasizes that he's in charge. He likens himself to the coach of a soccer team and his outside lobbyists to the players. He calls the shots but needs others with Beltway connections to execute the plan. "I realize you need to speak to a lot of people in this town to get your point across," he says.

Given the delicate relationship between the Kurds, Baghdad, and the United States, his lobbyists are playing a much riskier game than soccer.

Talabani, only 32, is a natural spokesman. He's handsome, with a wardrobe of impeccably tailored suits. He knows how to place a self-deprecating remark or intensify eye contact to play up a point. It's hard to believe that 11 years ago he was an auto mechanic working on Maseratis and Lancias in a London suburb.

He had no political ambitions, but politics was and is the family business. His father, Jalal Talabani, is the president of Iraq. The fall of Saddam's government made it possible for a Kurd to be a national leader.

For most of Qubad's childhood, his father was off leading the Kurdish resistance against Saddam. Qubad's mother left their home in Damascus to join his father when he was two, leaving Qubad to be raised by his grandparents in Surrey, England. Talabani's grandfather was a leader of the movement for Kurdish rights, and his grandmother was a writer. Political activists visited often.

Talabani tried to evade the obvious career path. In 2000, two years after graduating from Kingston College with a degree in auto engineering, he was focused on saving enough money to buy his own car-repair garage. Then a family friend who happened to be the US representative of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—one of the region's two main political parties—asked Talabani to move to Washington to be his assistant. At the time, Iraqi Kurdistan was represented here by two offices—one for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, another for its political rival, the Kurdish Democratic Party.

"I had no experience," says Talabani. "I was used to fixing and breaking things."

He took the job—and found he was good at it. He worked his way up to deputy in the office, then moved to Iraq at the start of the war in 2003 to serve as a liaison between the Kurds and American coalition forces. He landed in his current position a few years later when the Kurdistan Regional Government opened its first unified Washington office in place of the two party offices.

Today Talabani lives with his wife—an American he met while she worked on Iraq issues for the State Department—in Northwest DC. They're expecting a son.

And he retains his love of sports cars. Among the academic and policy books in his office is a large volume about Porsches, one of which he drives. He's also an amateur photographer—but there's not much time for hobbies. Talabani faces a tough battle in Washington.

For all the Kurdistan Regional Government's practiced independence, it's still part of Iraq, and American officials are careful not to jeopardize relations with the central government by siding too strongly with Kurdistan.

One US State Department official, speaking anonymously because he's not authorized to comment on the matter, says there's no competition between Talabani's office and Baghdad's Washington headquarters. "Our

relationship is clearly with the [Iraq] embassy," he says.

Recent accounts of human-rights abuses in the Kurdistan Region haven't helped Talabani's cause. The organization Human Rights Watch published a report last fall detailing the use of intimidation and violence by Kurdish authorities to force minority communities in Iraq's disputed oil-rich areas to identify as Kurdish, which could help the Kurdistan Regional Government win control of the valuable territory. The Kurds, historically cast as a persecuted minority, now find themselves portrayed as oppressors.

But the biggest challenge for Talabani is holding Washington's attention. Unlike the George W. Bush administration—which, Talabani says, "ate, drank, and slept Iraq"—the Obama administration has shaken up the agenda.

"I love Washington," Talabani says. "It's the best city in the world to be doing this kind of work. But it can jump from one issue to the next so quickly. Suddenly you try to get interest from Congress on Iraq, and everybody is Pakistan-focused and Afghanistan-focused."

The Kurds were among the few groups in Iraq to welcome the 2003 US invasion enthusiastically. Their pro-US attitude stems from the final years of Saddam's regime, when an American-protected no-fly zone allowed the Kurds to establish their autonomous region. Iraqi Kurdistan today is more secular than other parts of the country—and no American has been killed there since the start of the Iraq War.

All of that helped Talabani gain access to the highest levels of Bush's circle. Lobbying filings with the Justice Department show him meeting with then-Vice President and Mrs. Cheney at their residence and attending a dinner party with former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Talabani met with Cheney's former chief of staff, Scooter Libby, even after Libby's reputation was marred by his role in the Valerie Plame affair. Talabani explains that Libby was an ally while he served in Cheney's office, and "loyalty is big for us."

Now that the United States is withdrawing from Iraq, Talabani is trying to convince Congress and the Obama administration that Kurdistan has a lot to lose. "It's premature to say Iraq is in the bag, Iraq is solved, and we can move on to the next issue," he says.

As American troops pull out, Talabani is betting that money can secure long-lasting friendships in Washington.

One of his first objectives was to find support in Congress. He assigned Kurdistan's lobbyists at BGR Group, Greenberg Traurig, and the Arlington-based consulting firm American Business Development Group the job of forming a Kurdish American Caucus in the House of Representatives.

The Kurdistan Regional Government pays monthly retainers of \$40,000 to Greenberg Traurig and \$10,000 to American Business Development Group. It pays BGR Group the most—\$135,000 a quarter.

BGR—home to some of the best-connected Republican lobbyists in town, such as former George H.W. Bush White House officials Ed Rogers and Lanny Griffith—is the only firm on Kurdistan's payroll that Talabani didn't personally hire, according to lobbying filings.

Talabani and BGR have a complicated past. When Talabani worked for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, BGR lobbied for the rival Kurdish Democratic Party. BGR's current contract with the Kurdistan Regional Government was signed not by Talabani but by Kurdistan's then-prime minister, a leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party. BGR declined to comment for this story, citing a policy of not talking about clients.

Talabani says BGR's influence has waned now that the Democrats control Washington, though he commends the firm's ability to develop good strategy.

Based on Justice Department filings and Talabani's description of his lobbyists' roles, American Business Development Group, a less well-known and less expensive firm, is doing much of Kurdistan's legwork on Capitol Hill.

Talabani calls his lobbyist there, Ayal Frank, “my guy.” The two met through their wives, who are cousins, when Frank was a staffer for then-representative James Maloney, a Democrat from Connecticut, and Talabani was working for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Frank took the lead on developing the Kurdish American Caucus, which presses the State Department to back Kurdish interests and pushes pro-Kurdish legislation in the House. In spring 2008, Frank found two congressmen to cochair it, Democrat Lincoln Davis of Tennessee and South Carolina Republican Joe Wilson. Both had traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan. They say they were so impressed by the people there that they were inspired to head the caucus.

Wilson was particularly taken with the region’s pro-American attitude. “I saw a very upscale subdivision, and it was very appropriately named Little America,” he says, adding that streets were named after US states.

The cochairs recruited other members, and Frank circulated information about the caucus to House offices, including talking points that members could use to answer possible objections from colleagues—for example, that the caucus implies congressional support for an independent Kurdistan, which undermines the US goal of national unity in Iraq. Frank’s answer circumvents the issue by saying that the caucus is meant simply to “promote understanding of Kurdish culture, history, and issues important to the Kurdish community in the US and elsewhere.”

Lobbyists at BGR and Greenberg hit their Rolodexes to get other members on board. The bipartisan caucus now numbers 33—15 Republicans and 18 Democrats.

Several caucus members are backing a House resolution, penned by Ayal Frank, calling on the State Department to open a US consulate in the Kurdistan region. The legislation was introduced in October by California Republican Dana Rohrabacher, who sits on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The only US consular services in Iraq are at the embassy in Baghdad—some 200 miles from Kurdistan. The resolution says that this is a problem for Americans visiting or living in northern Iraq who need consular services, and it asserts that a consulate will attract American investment to the region.

The push for a consulate is a primary objective for Talabani this year. The US Chamber of Commerce—where Talabani’s lobbyists helped establish a task force to encourage investment in Kurdistan—is supporting the effort.

Experts on the region say there’s risk involved. Michael Gunter, a professor at Tennessee Tech University who has written extensively on the Kurds, acknowledges that a consulate could be useful to Americans in Kurdistan but points out that “everyone knows it’s looked upon as quasi-diplomatic representation.” In other words, it could appear that the United States is treating Kurdistan as if it were independent.

Says Talabani: “I get a sense sometimes that our friends in the US create problems for themselves by overthinking things. We’re not asking for a consulate so we can gloat. We have genuine interests in having an elevated US presence in the north.”

But Samir Sumaida’ie, Iraq’s ambassador in Washington, says the problem is that, by lobbying for a consulate in Kurdistan, Talabani is interfering in the central government’s business. “We feel wider representation of the United States through consular services is to be welcome,” Sumaida’ie says. “But that is for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to determine.”

A few months before he sent Dana Rohrabacher the consulate resolution, Ayal Frank sent him another piece of draft legislation addressing one of the most troublesome issues between Arab Iraqis and the Kurds—how to determine control of oil-rich Kirkuk. It called on Congress to support implementation of article 140 of the Iraqi constitution—a provision requiring residents of disputed areas, including Kirkuk, to vote on whether they should be controlled by the central Iraqi government or by the Kurdistan Regional Government. The constitution set a 2007 deadline for the referendum, which still hasn’t been held.

The stakes are high. Kirkuk sits atop an estimated 8.5 billion barrels or more of crude oil. Whoever controls Kirkuk controls its untapped wealth.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein, thousands of Kurds—some forced out by Saddam and some new settlers—have moved to Kirkuk. If the referendum is held, there's a good chance they'll constitute a large enough voting bloc to get the city annexed to Kurdistan. Observers fear that could ignite a civil war with Baghdad.

Rohrabacher never introduced this resolution; his office didn't respond to requests as to the reason. But Talabani's lobbyists are still pursuing the issue.

Greenberg Traurig's John Einwechter is one of them. Greenberg is the only one of Talabani's lobby shops that's also a law firm. Einwechter says his legal background helps him explain Iraq's constitutional issues, such as article 140, to policymakers in Washington.

"What the US wants is a constitutional democracy to prevail in Iraq," he says. "We can promote that by promoting understanding of the Iraqi constitution."

Talabani says his government is committed to sharing the oil wealth of Kirkuk with the rest of Iraq under a formula already agreed on with Baghdad. The formula, however, is just an agreement—it's not a law.

Still, Talabani says, "the reality is there's enough of this pie to distribute."

Yet another problem is that no national legal framework is in place to protect foreign investment in oil exploration. The Kurdistan Regional Government passed its own oil-investment law in 2006, but Baghdad considers contracts signed under it to be illegal.

This dispute has deterred American oil companies from venturing into Kurdistan. So far, only four US oil companies are operating there—Hunt Oil, Aspect Energy, Hillwood International Energy, and Prime Natural Resources.

The Department of Commerce sent a trade mission to Kurdistan in 2008—its first and only such mission to Iraq since the United States invaded. Then-deputy Commerce secretary John Sullivan, now a partner in the DC office of the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, led the delegation of American business representatives.

The trip did not include oil or gas companies. Sullivan calls the issue "a political football" and says Commerce was focused on encouraging Kurdistan and Baghdad to reconcile their differences over oil regulations. Even in touting investment in other sectors, Sullivan says, the department walked "a fine line. . . . We had to keep perspective and not go too far such that the government in Baghdad would think that we were encouraging separatism for Iraqi Kurdistan."

This hasn't kept Talabani from promoting oil investment. "We really reached out to the international oil market and told the world that we're open for business," he says. Lobbying disclosures show several meetings and phone conversations with oil executives, including Ray Hunt of Hunt Oil and Scott Larsen, president of TransAtlantic Petroleum, to discuss Kurdistan's oil-and-gas market.

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And if the Commerce Department is a reluctant supporter, the US Chamber of Commerce is not. It established a Kurdistan Region Investment Task Force in 2008.

Yasmin Motamedi, head of the chamber's Middle Eastern Affairs Department, says a number of American businesses belong to the task force, including oil and gas companies, though the chamber declined to name them. Like the Commerce Department, the chamber has sent business representatives to Kurdistan. Oil companies didn't attend those trips either, but Motamedi says they weren't specifically excluded.

Talabani's lobbyists at Greenberg Traurig also have led business delegations that included representatives interested in the transportation, telecommunications, and agriculture sectors—but not the oil-and-gas industry.

The final front of Talabani's campaign is the American media—he believes Kurdistan has been “failing the PR battle.” He says the media like an underdog, and now that Kurdistan is emerging as an economic and political force in Iraq, it's losing that status. Allegations of human-rights abuses by Kurds don't help.

After his government approved a larger public-relations budget for his office last spring, Talabani hired the Washington public-relations firm Qorvis, which represents such image-challenged foreign clients as Saudi Arabia. Kurdistan pays Qorvis a \$40,000 monthly retainer, though Talabani says he's still working out the specifics of the firm's role in his operation. He temporarily brought in the lobbying firm Cassidy & Associates under a three-month, \$50,000 contract to help interest members of Congress in traveling to Kurdistan.

If the regional government he represents looks less and less like an underdog, Talabani himself bears little resemblance to one. With the flashy car, sharp suit, and roster of lobbyists and consultants, he looks and acts the part of a Washington powerbroker. But his influence is limited by a critical detail:

The Kurdistan Regional Government “has views that we're receptive to,” says the State Department official speaking anonymously, “but it's different because they are not an embassy.”

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## Issue 1 of the KRG-USA's Official Newsletter

1 message

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Kurdistan Regional Government - USA <qubad.talabany@krg.org>

Wed, Apr 7, 2010 at 9:51 AM

Reply-To: qubad.talabany@krg.org

To: farakrg@gmail.com

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KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

U.S. LIAISON OFFICE NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010

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## GREETINGS FROM QUBAD TALABANI

Happy Newroz. I am pleased to present the official newsletter of the Kurdistan Regional Government's Liaison Office to the United States (KRG- USA). This is our latest step to better link our Office with our friends and Community. They join such well-received publications as our annual investment guide, tourist brochures, our blogs and news releases in spreading the word about our homeland and all of its wonderful potential.

In the adjacent Close Up section we will spotlight places and relevant activities, whether in Kurdistan or where you live in the United States. I look forward to your ideas and thoughts.

We see 2010 as a year of progress for our Region and our relations with all of our friends in the United States. When you are in Washington, please stop by and visit your home in the nation's capital. Our Office is your active resource to stay informed and serve.

## COMMUNITY

Kurdish Community groups across the United States are spearheading a U.S. Census assistance program through April, taking the lead in encouraging the Kurdish population to be counted in the 2010 census. "We believe strong participation is just a part of our civic duties and sign of patriotism," said Zaid Brifkani of the Salahadeen Center of Nashville. "That would help us in reaching out to the community from different backgrounds, not just necessarily the Kurdish population."

Communities in Nashville, Atlanta and Northern Virginia are leading efforts to educate Kurdish Americans on the importance of participating in the 2010 Census. Population figures determine federal government assistance, and drives economic development. <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>

1532 16th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: +1.202.797.575  
Fax: +1.202.821.1870  
[www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org)



## CLOSE UP

The newly expanded and modernized Erbil International Airport (EIA) is centrally located on the Silk Road of the Airways. A convenient and cutting edge facility, it is fully equipped to be a premier hub between East and West. EIA officially opened on July 7, 2005, and welcomed its first International Air Transport Association carrier on December 11 the following year. EIA is a world class airport by technical standards and in passenger comfort. <http://erbilairport.net/>



## CULTURE

In Washington, an exhibit hosted by the KRG-USA's Department for Art & Culture showcased Kurdish artists.

The exhibit - "My Kurdistan: Paintings of Kurdish Life" presenting art by Falah Shwan, Serdar Kestai, Hikmat Hindi and other prominent Kurdish artists - drew strong crowds at the DC based Foundry Gallery. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2Jt9yZQk\\_Y/](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2Jt9yZQk_Y/)

LAPARAY DUAM/PAGE TWO

## KURDS VOTE IN THE U.S.

Kurdish political parties won 57 seats of the 325 seats in the March national Iraqi elections. For the Iraqi Kurds in the United States, voting in the elections was a day of celebration and dancing. Many dressed in Kurdish clothes while carrying the Kurdistan flag. Those who traveled from far were treated hospitably by the local Kurdish community, who opened homes and offered lunch, tea and candy. One

elder Kurd in Nashville remarked it reminded him of his youth seeing the Peshmerga go into battle, but this time, instead they were going to the ballot.

**Dasko Shirwani** the KRG-USA's Director of Community Outreach said "It was important to see Kurdish Americans come out and vote in large numbers, even though the Independent Iraqi Election Commission's regulations did not make it easy for out of country citizens to vote"

## HALABJA GENOCIDE COMMEMORATED IN LOS ANGELES

An exhibit at the Museum of Tolerance recalls one of worst atrocities of the late 20th century, the gassing of 5,000 Kurdish men, women and children in Halabja by Saddam Hussein. The exhibit, a result of a partnership between the KRG- USA's Department of Art and Culture and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, opened on the March anniversary of the 1988 massacre. "If you do not speak up, even in a case here where our community is not involved, then the world becomes complicit," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the museum.



*KRG-USA Director for Art and Culture, Najat Abdulla opens exhibit in Los Angeles, California*

## CONGRESS

H.Res.873, a bipartisan resolution calling on the State Department to establish a U.S. Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, was introduced to the House of Representative.

On February 24th, the House of Representatives passed H. Res. 944, a resolution calling for steps to be taken to protect religious minorities in Iraq.

Consistent with requests made by the resolution, the KRG has made repeated calls for full adherence to the federal constitution, which has provisions designed to protect these groups.

## CATCHING UP

In April, executive assistant **Brenda Kinser** celebrates five years of guiding operations at the KRG-US headquarters.

**Zhala Sabir** arrived in March, heading up Congressional and Academic Affairs. Previously Zhala was posted to the Iraq embassy in Canada 2005. In 2009 she joined the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations in Erbil.

**Yousif Azad Ismail**, Office Manager since September, was born and raised in Kirkuk. Prior to arriving in the US, Yousif worked as a protocol-liaison office in Kurdistan.

The Kurdistan Regional Government Liaison Office – U.S.A. is registered as an agent of the Kurdistan Regional Government under 22 U.S.C. § 611 et seq

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## Kurdistan Regional Government

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KRG's Representative to US attends Iraq Liberation Day ceremony

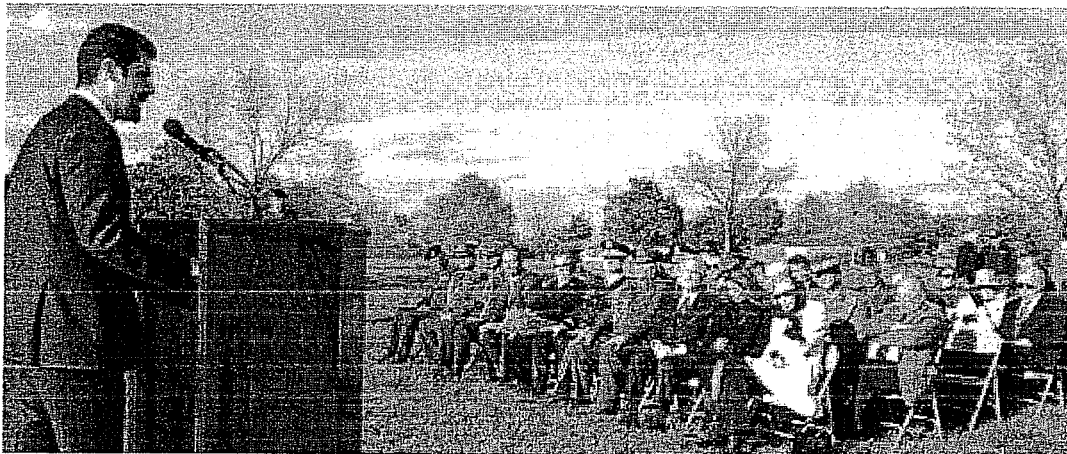
9 April 2010

Washington, US (KRG.org) – Mr Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Representative to the United States, on April 9th addressed a ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery commemorating Iraq Liberation Day.

Members of American and Iraqi forces, including members of the Peshmerga, attended the event, alongside veterans and family of those soldiers who have fallen in support of Iraq's freedom.



“On this day, it is appropriate and right for us to commemorate the sacrifices made to liberate Iraq from decades of brutal tyranny under Saddam Hussein,” said Mr. Talabani. “So to be absolutely clear: Iraq thanks you. I thank you. And the people of Iraq’s Kurdistan Region, most of all, thank you.”



During the ceremony, members of American and Iraqi forces laid wreaths at the joint gravesite of fallen soldiers from the U.S. and Iraq. Ms. Hayyam Sami Mahdi Al-Shather and Ms. Debra Argel-Bastian, whose husband and son respectively are buried at the site, attended and spoke at the event. Iraqi Air force Captain Ali Abbas Rubaie, Ms. Al-Shathers deceased husband is the only Iraqi buried at Arlington Cemetery.

Other speakers included General Nasier Arkan Abadi, Vice Chief of Staff, Iraqi Joint Forces of the Republic of Iraq; U.S. Brigadier General Judd Lyons, Adjutant General of Nebraska; and Ms. Wendy Hoffman, National President of Blue Star Mothers of America.


“Today, we must thank those who have helped us get to where we are,” Mr. Talabani said.

“Because although we face complicated political problems, the majority of the political forces and people who guide Iraqi society want to live in peace. They want to live up to the promise that American forces have given us.”

The third annual Universal Remembrance Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery ended with a reading of a keynote address from KRG Minister for Peshmerga Affairs by Representative Talabani.

- [Click here for Mr. Talabani's Speech \(PDF\)](#)
- [Click here for KRG Minister for Peshmerga Affairs's Speech \(PDF\)](#)

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## Remarks of Qubad Talabani At Arlington Cemetery

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Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for inviting me here today. I am humbled and honored to be with you representing the people and government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In this hallowed ground lay men and women who fought valiantly to preserve the ideals that uphold the American way: freedom, peace, prosperity and opportunity for all. These are universal ideals, but they still must be fought for in the face of oppression.

From Fredericksburg to France, from Kuwait to Kandahar, American military forces have bravely and diligently ensured that freedom and security can and will prevail.

Within that mission, they have provided shelter and protection to those who could not provide it for themselves—including Iraqis. Many have fallen so Iraq has the chance to stand up.

So on this day, it is appropriate and right for us to commemorate the sacrifices made to liberate Iraq from decades of brutal tyranny under Saddam Hussein.

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Iraqis—and Kurds in particular—owe a tremendous debt of thanks to American troops, veterans, and military families—all of whom have played a role in bringing freedom to Iraq. We also take this opportunity to recognize the sacrifices made by Iraqi from all part of the country to protect our new found freedom. We have learned that freedom is not free.

While to some the reasons for your involvement have not always been clear—obscured at times by emotions or politics, know on this day that your sacrifices have brought hope, opportunity and freedom where once there was only tyranny.

We appreciate what you have given us, and we hope that Iraq can live up to that promise.

So to be absolutely clear: Iraq thanks you. I thank you. And the people of Iraq's Kurdistan Region, most of all, thank you.

For the people of Iraqi Kurdistan the liberation of Iraq did not begin with Operation Iraqi Freedom. It began more than a decade before, when American Forces conducted a humanitarian mission—Operation Provide Comfort—which gave the Kurdish people their first glimmer of hope.

Throughout the late 1980s, Saddam conducted a state-sanctioned campaign of genocide against us, namely the Anfal Genocide. Nearly two hundred thousand Kurds, including men, women and children, are still missing to this day. Chemical and Biological weapons were used in over 250 instances, five thousand we massacred in the town of Halabja alone after Saddam Hussein used a cocktail of mustard gas, Sarin and other nerve agents to destroy the once beautiful town.

In the wake of the Gulf War, when Saddam moved again to crush the Kurdish people, and millions of Kurds fled to the borders of Turkey and Iran, American Forces stepped in. They not only provided cover, food and water. They provided hope.

They ensured our place in Iraq. And through the subsequent enforcement of the No-Fly Zone, American and international forces saved the Kurds from brutal oppression and genocide.

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What this created between us—between Kurds and Americans—was a bond, one that endures to this day.



So in 2003, in the lead up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, without hesitation Kurdish forces signed on to assist American efforts. During the ensuing war, we fought side-by-side. Our soldiers fell, at each other's side, protecting and defending our hope.

Even today, there continues to be strong and close cooperation between the Iraqi Kurdistan's Regional Guard, the Peshmerga and U.S. Special Forces. This cooperation continues to strengthen, which is partly why we have not seen terrorism seep into the Kurdistan Region.

But I'm proud to say that the relationship between the Kurdistan Region and the U.S. remains strong and will continue to remain strong.

As a country, Iraq has come a long way since 2003. Violence nationwide has decreased; democratic elections have been held, twice, most recently last month; and American forces have begun to depart.

But we must not lull ourselves into a false sense of security, many challenges remain, some political, others security. We have seen over the last week or so there have been attacks in well known trouble spots.

That is why there remains the need for a sustained, relationship between the U.S. and Iraq, which includes the Kurdistan Region.

That relationship must be political, economic and security in nature, because Iraq still has much progress to make.

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And so we call for continued partnership with the U.S.—and as President Obama has said, a “phased and responsible” withdrawal—to ensure Iraq overcomes its internal political differences.

These differences are not intractable. The solution to our issues is simple and is before us—the Iraqi federal constitution.

Right now, while Iraq is in the midst of a government-forming process, this fact must be kept in the forefront of our minds.

The next Iraqi government will be responsible for many things:

- For the transition of U.S. forces out of Iraq.
- For crafting effective policy to maintain security for all.
- And for addressing outstanding issues that threaten our stability—such as reconciling the disputed territories, passing an equitable hydrocarbons law, and ensuring the civilian and constitution control of the armed forces.

It is therefore essential that we form our next government with care—not putting haste before reason and quality.

As we await the outcomes in the coming months, we can take heart in the fact that the success of these elections—even in the face of terrorist violence—is a win over those forces that aim to mire Iraq in the tragedies of its past.

Iraq as a whole must be rid of that way of life, just like the Kurdistan Region is; we are moving forward.

Today, we must thank those who have helped us get to where we are. Because although we face complicated political problems, the majority of the political forces and people who guide Iraqi society want to live in peace. They want to live up to the promise that American forces have given us.

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Today we commemorate those who have fallen. We strive to live up to that promise. And we extend our thanks to the troops, the veterans and their families and all others who have made this possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you.



***Remarks of Sheikh Jaffer Mustafa Ali***  
***Minister for Peshmerga Affairs***  
***Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq***

At the National Observance of Iraqi Liberation  
Arlington Cemetery, Virginia

Widows of the fallen, Generals, Diplomats and Distinguished guests.

It is a deep honor to be here with you at Arlington Cemetery commemorating the valor of the fallen and celebrating the heroism of the living.

This hallowed ground, serves as a reminder of the sacrifices of Americans throughout history, to unselfishly help others.

---

We in Iraq are honored to have had America liberate us from Saddam Hussein. We celebrate Iraqi Liberation Day today and appreciate America's determination to help all Iraqis become free, to taste the hope of democracy and to be able to dream of a future free from terror, genocide and oppression.

This event today marks a fitting tribute to Americans, and Iraqis who have lost their lives in pursuit of freedom. May their sacrifice be etched in our hearts, and may we forever observe and commemorate their gallantry.

I assure you present here today and the American people in general that their sacrifice has heralded an opportunity for lasting peace in my country, and by extension yours.

The world has just witnessed Iraq's second nationwide elections. Our recent elections followed the one we had in Kurdistan last summer. True markers of our new democracy – real indicators that what America hoped would emerge from its intervention is beginning to come to fruition.

On behalf of the people, and government of Iraqi Kurdistan, I say thank you for your sacrifice, thank you for your enduring partnership.

I am a Peshmerga. Peshmerga translates into those who face death. I am proud to have served my people for much of my adult life. But my proudest moment was when in March 2003, I led my Peshmerga battalions into battle, alongside US Forces in Operation Viking Hammer.

---

Together, Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga, and American Forces fought side by side, to eradicate our land of a terrorist group affiliated with Al Qaeda. And today, I am honored to be continuing to build on that partnership as Minister in our Regions Cabinet for Peshmerga Affairs.

Your sons and daughters, husbands and wives and parents who led the way following in the spirit of your proud military history – of Lexington and Concord, Gettysburg and Omaha Beach – have after battles in Baghdad, Falluja, Qaim and Tawela, written new chapters in your country's military history – and ours.

This partnership, teamwork and the camaraderie, between Iraqis from across the country and Americans will ensure that our friendship and alliance will last many years, ultimately leading to sustainable peace in my country while making yours safer and thus the entire region more stable.

I am confident that this teamwork between Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region, and the United States will ensure that a viable federal democracy is cemented in Iraq. This partnership will ensure that Iraq's armed forces, including the Peshmerga are as professional, and disciplined as those of the United States.

We will continue to be a great team and we hope that the current close relationship between our militaries continues and grows. We are friends as well as allies – and we value both.

Kurds know very well the sacrifices Americans made for us. Many of us in Iraq, and in particular the Kurdistan Region have lost family members, friends – some entire villages and communities.

---

We know the value of each and every life. And while we as Kurds are proud that not one of the tragic 4,388 deaths the US has suffered in Iraq has occurred in the Kurdistan Region, we still mourn every loss, and consider your loss, our loss.

My only regret today is that I cannot thank each family individually for the sacrifices they made for us in person.

Your forces who came to free us, in this faraway, unknown place acted as if they were home. The respect to which they gave us, the spirit of victory we all felt, paved the way to that true partnership toward liberation and freedom that we all embrace this Remembrance Day

Today, American forces are training Iraqi forces up and down the country, while your diplomats help us overcome political hurdles. We hope that soon, your private sector will further strengthen the bonds of friendship between our peoples as they bring their technology and know-how to Iraq including the Kurdistan Region.

Much work remains to be done to make sure our foundation of freedom that you helped build is strong and invulnerable. Our determination and dedication has shifted from celebrating liberation to governing fairly and governing well – always vigilant against those wishing to take away what you helped us achieve.

We will not let that happen, that is my vow. We will not let our freedom and democracy be taken away. We will earn every day what your bravery and sacrifice has given us. We will uphold and cherish our constitution, as you do yours.

---

Let us celebrate this day as Iraq's liberation day, and while nothing will ever ease the pain of losing a loved one, let us embrace Iraq's milestones, as a reminder that our the collective sacrifice, of Iraqi Arabs, Kurds and of Americans was not, and will not be in vain.

In that spirit, the Kurdistan Regional Government would be proud to host the next convocation to commemorate the fallen, and celebrate the living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and I hope that many of you in attendance will join us on that special occasion.

Thank you all very very much.

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2010 NOV -1 PM 2:12

## Lufthansa inaugurates flight to Erbil

1 message

Qubad Talabani <qubad.talabani@krg.org>

Reply-To: qubad.talabani@krg.org

To: farakrg@gmail.com

Thu, Apr 29, 2010 at 12:19 PM

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### PRESS RELEASE

April 29th 2010

For Immediate Release

Contact:

KRG-USA

+1-202-767-7575 or

[tom.squitieri@krg.org](mailto:tom.squitieri@krg.org)

[www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org)



## KRG and Germany inaugurate first Lufthansa flight to Erbil



Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq (KRG.org) - Iraqi and Kurdistan Region Ministers, diplomatic officials and the business community gathered on Tuesday to inaugurate Lufthansa's first flights to Erbil International Airport, in the capital of the Kurdistan Region.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Interior Minister Karim Sinjari and Iraq's Deputy Prime



Minister Dr Roj Shawis and Erbil's diplomatic community participated in the ceremony.

In his speech Sinjari said, "By coming here, Lufthansa has made the determination that Iraqi Kurdistan is a safe and secure place to work." He added, "I commend Lufthansa for making the decision to bring their services to us, and to the people and business of Kurdistan and Iraq."

A large group of guests assembled on the tarmac of Erbil International Airport (EIA) to hear speeches by officials and business representatives and watch the arrival of Lufthansa flight 696 from Frankfurt.

Peter Andres, Lufthansa's Vice President for Corporate Security, commented on Erbil's hospitality and beauty. He thanked Austrian Airlines, which was the first regular scheduled carrier to the Kurdistan Region, for paving the way for other airlines, and said that Lufthansa plans to resume flights also to Baghdad this summer after a stoppage of many years. He noted the presence at the ceremony of Germany's Consul General Dr Oliver Schnakenberg and officials from Germany's Interior Ministry and Foreign Ministry.

Stafford Clarry, Acting Director of the airport, described its evolution since its beginnings in 2005. School children are given tours of the airport, he said, as "They are our future, the airport is our future, and this airport is also your future."

Mr Dilsos CEO and Managing Director of Zagros Group, said that in the Kurdistan Region and the rest of Iraq, German products signify quality and he was happy to see another quality German product here.

Lufthansa hosted a gala dinner the evening before the ceremony. The KRG's Head of Foreign Relations Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir thanked Lufthansa for its important initiative, and Germany's Consul General in Erbil for strengthening its relationship with the Kurdistan Region. He said, "Lufthansa is a wonderful bridge for our people to Germany and the rest of Europe," promoting travel to Europe and enabling others to experience the Kurdistan Region in Iraq.

Dr Schnakenberg said, "Today both Baghdad and Erbil are now part of the businessman's map". The opening of the German Consulate General in Erbil last year showed how much Germany values its partnership with the Kurdistan Region and Iraq, and its contribution to their reconstruction.

Lufthansa now operates four flights a week between Frankfurt and Erbil.

### **About the Kurdistan Region**

The Kurdistan Region is a constitutionally recognized region in federal Iraq. With a population of over 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Suleimania cover approximately 30,888 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives.

###

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## KRG Representative briefs Members of Congress

1 message

Qubad Talabani <qubad.talabani@krg.org>

Reply-To: qubad.talabani@krg.org

To: farakrg@gmail.com

Wed, May 5, 2010 at 7:56 AM



**PRESS RELEASE**

May/4/2010

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact:

Tom Squitieri

[tom.squitieri@krg.org](mailto:tom.squitieri@krg.org) or +1-202-797-7575

### KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ'S REPRESENTATIVE BRIEFS CONGRESS ON POST-ELECTION IRAQ

#### Promotes deepening and broadening relations with the U.S.

WASHINGTON [May 4th, 2010] - Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq's (KRG) Representative to the United States Qubad J. Talabani has concluded a comprehensive series of meetings with Members of Congress, including House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman, on the state of Iraq and the country's government-forming process, following the Parliamentary elections in March.

In the meetings, Talabani outlined the ongoing deliberations among various political blocs and the fact that no block or candidate has enough votes to form a government without a coalition. "Given how high the stakes are, it is imperative that Iraq forms a good government-one that is formed in a timely manner and one that will also manage the U.S. military transition from Iraq while actively working to resolve Iraq's internal political issues," Talabani said.

Representative Talabani reminded US lawmakers of the need for a robust long-term relationship between the US and Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region. "Deepening US engagement with Iraq and the Kurdistan Region will be very important. This engagement doesn't need to be in military terms, but rather in terms of diplomacy and elevated US representation throughout the country," he said.

The Kurdistan Regional Government has long called for the U.S. government to establish a consulate in the Kurdistan Region and this matter was a focal point of Representative Talabani's discussions with Members of Congress. Congressmen Dana Rohrabacher and Congressmen Lincoln Davis have introduced legislation encouraging the State Department to establish such a consulate in Erbil.

In addition to meeting with Chairman Berman, Mr. Talabani met with 21 members of Congress, including Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL); Rep. Bob Goodlatte (R-VA); Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA); Rep. Gary Peters (D-MI); Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY); Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA); Rep. Carol Shea-Porter (D-NH); Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO); Rep. John Tanner (D-TN); Rep. Henry Johnson (D-GA); Rep. Tim Walz (D-MN); Rep. Robert Wittman (R-VA); Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA); Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ); Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX); Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL); Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN); Sen. Roland Burris (D-IL); Sen Lindsey Graham (R-SC) Sen Edward Kauffman (D-DE) and with the staff of the Kurdish American Congressional Caucus.

## About the Kurdistan Region

The Kurdistan Region is a constitutionally recognized region in federal Iraq. With a population of over 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Suleimania cover approximately 40,000 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives.

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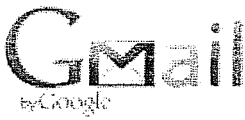
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## KRG-USA Newsletter -May 2010

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KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

U.S. LIAISON OFFICE NEWSLETTER

MAY 2010

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## QUBAD'S REPORT

Representative Qubad Talabani met with U.S. Rep. Howard Berman, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and over 20 other members of Congress to discuss the post-election situation in Iraq and the future of U.S.-Iraqi/KRG relations.

The series of meetings are part of the KRG's continuing extensive outreach to the U.S. Congress, including Senate Foreign Affairs Committee staff and staffers on the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus. Representative Talabani urged U.S. lawmakers that opening a Consulate in the Kurdistan Region serves the U.S.'s long-term political and economic interests in Iraq while providing much needed consular affairs for Americans in Kurdistan.

Representative Talabani also shared the Kurdistan Region's perspective with officials from the National Security Council, Office of the Vice-President, State Department, and Defense Department on issues ranging from the outcome of the national election to political developments within Iraqi Kurdistan.

## FILMING UNDERWAY

Filming of *The Kurdistan Seed* project is underway this month in Kurdistan. The project celebrates Kurdistan's rich agricultural history from ancient times to today. One goal is for the project to raise awareness and gather international support for the Region's farmers.

The film will focus on the Region's efforts to become self sufficient in food production, highlighting crops native to the Kurdistan Region, such as wheat, lentils, barley and onions. It will also recap the Region's history of farming and how it was once the breadbasket for much of the Middle East.

Filming is to include daily life on three different Kurdish farms, a few days in the life of a young Kurdish farmer just beginning his craft, organic fruit farmers and their orchards, and film students at the agricultural college.

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Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: +1.202.797.7575  
Fax: +1.202.821.1870  
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[www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org)



## CLOSE UP

The Yezidi (or Êzîdî) is one of the Near East's most ancient and mysterious people. Most Yezidis live in Iraqi Kurdistan, with smaller pockets in the Kurdish parts of Syria, Southeast Turkey, Russia and Armenia. The holiest site for Yezidis is Lalish Temple. A central Figure in Yezidism is Malak Tawusi (Peacock Angel) who was created by God before the creation of the world and who embodies both light and darkness. The High Holy Day for all Yezidis around the world is known as Red Wednesday (Charshembe Sur), and this day falls on a Wednesday in early April.



## CULTURE

Human fossils from Shanidar cave in Kurdistan are a centerpiece attraction at the new Human Origins exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. Those visiting also can enjoy a booth where you can see what you would look like 2 million years ago.

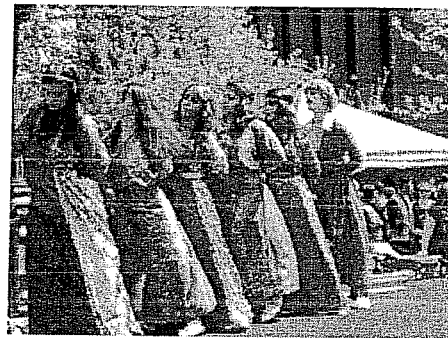
The exhibit builds on the 1971 book "Beyond Bones" by Owen Edwards, which details the early excavation of Shanidar Cave complex. Shanidar has never been fully excavated.

LAPARAY DUAM/PAGE TWO

## COMMUNITY

International Week at George Mason University is one of the most famous weeks on one of the most diverse campuses in the nation. This year, after some effort, the flag of Iraqi Kurdistan was hung beside the flags of other countries and nations in the Johnson Center. It was a proud and emotional moment for many Kurds. An unprecedented number of Kurds participated in the Parade of Nations and carried more Kurdish flags than any other group.

The Kurdistan Student Organization placed fourth in the overall dance competition, prompting many students and faculty with questions about Kurds and Kurdistan—and Kurdish clothes. KSO members used the Culture on the Lawn event to make fresh kabobs and grilled vegetables, perform Kurdish dances and entice audience members to participate. The Showcase of Cultures was another venue for Kurdish food, snacks, books, display boards and maps. KSO members closed by attending "Rep Your Roots" and showcasing the documentary entitled, "Who am I? I am a Kurd", reading poetry and from "Hell is Over: Voices of the Kurds After Saddam" and performing dances.



*KRG staffer Sabat Mahmoud helped organize the Kurdish student participation in the GMU International Day.*

## DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH

Representative Qubad Talabani met separately with Ambassadors Dr. Christian Prosl of Austria, Petr Kolar of the Czech Republic, Pierre Vimont of France, and Jonas Hafstrom of Sweden, as well as diplomats from Japan, Norway and Germany, to provide details on the outcome of Iraq's national election, discuss Iraq's outstanding issues, and to encourage cultural and economic partnerships. The diplomats were impressed by the increasing number of construction and development projects in Erbil and throughout the Kurdistan Region. Talabani thanked each embassy for their involvement and interest, especially in promoting economic investment.

## CATCHING UP

Kurdish communities across the United States have urged their respective members of Congress to support a House Resolution (H. Res. 873) calling on the State Department to open a consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Recently the community in Washington State met with Rep. Jim McDermott; members of the American Kurdish Council (AKC) in Virginia met with Rep. Jim Moran; and Kurdish Americans in Binghamton, New York, and St. Louis, Missouri, met with their respective Congressmen's staffers. These discussions follow previous meetings held by Kurdish communities in Arizona with Rep. John Shadegg and in Tennessee with Kurdish American Caucus Chair Rep. Lincoln Davis. There are currently 28 members of Congress who have signed on to H. Res. 873.

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## Congress Urges Establishing a U.S. Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

1 message

Qubad Talabani <qubad.talabani@krg.org>

Reply-To: qubad.talabani@krg.org

To: farakrg@gmail.com

Wed, May 19, 2010 at 11:21 PM

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**PRESS RELEASE**

May/19/2010

**For Immediate Release**

Contact:

Tom [Squitieri@krg.org](mailto:Squitieri@krg.org) or +1-202-797-7575

[www.knowkurdistan.com](http://www.knowkurdistan.com)

### U.S. House of Representatives Approves Resolution 873 Calling for the Establishment of a Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

WASHINGTON, DC - May 19, 2010 - Today, the U.S. House of Representatives approved Resolution 873, calling for the establishment of a U.S. consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The Resolution signifies the United States' continued support for the stability, prosperity, human rights and democracy of the Kurdistan Region, even as U.S. troops redeploy in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement.

"I would like to thank the co-authors of the resolution and members of the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus who supported this resolution," said Qubad Talabani, Representative to the United States of the Kurdistan Regional Government. "The establishment of a consulate in the Kurdistan Region will broaden and deepen and already strong relationship with America."

The House Resolution states that the "establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq will reaffirm United States support for the stability, prosperity, and democracy that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has achieved."

Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), the resolution's sponsor, called H.Res.873 a "moral and practical resolution." He went on to say, "a strong relationship with the Kurdish people serves the ideals of peace, stability and democratic governance" and that the "Kurdish part of the country has served as a model for democracy" since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Rohrabacher concluded that the establishment of a consulate in Erbil would "underscore the great friendship

between the US and the Kurdish people."

Currently, consular and citizen services are only provided by the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, more than 200 miles away from the safe and secure Kurdistan Region. U.S. citizens and visitors to the Region must travel this distance to receive such services. Establishing a consulate in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region's capital, will increase travel to the Region and encourage more business investment and government and NGO missions to the area.

Seventeen countries, including European nations, have diplomatic representation in Erbil, and this year the U.S. Department of State altered its "Travel Advisory" for Iraq to recognize the safety and security of the Kurdistan Region.

### About the Kurdistan Region

The Kurdistan Region is a constitutionally recognized region in federal Iraq. With a population of over 4 million and rapidly increasing, the three governorates of Duhok, Erbil and Suleimania cover approximately 40,000 square miles. The Kurdistan Region is considered to be the safest, most stable Region in Iraq, and it is host to an ever expanding number of commercial and trade initiatives. For more information visit [www.knowkurdistan.org](http://www.knowkurdistan.org)

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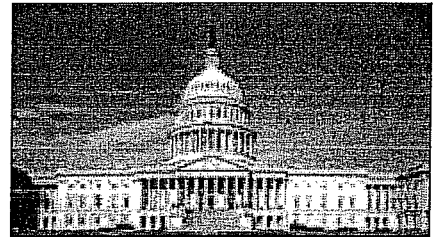
## Kurdistan Regional Government

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[KRG.org](#) - 15:13:05 20 May. 2010

House of Representatives approves resolution calling for US Consulate in Kurdistan

Washington DC, US (KRG.org) - The US House of Representatives yesterday approved a resolution calling for the establishment of a US consulate in the Kurdistan Region. The resolution signals America's continued support for the stability, prosperity, human rights and democracy of the Kurdistan Region.



Four Congressmen spoke in favour of Resolution 873, which was passed with no opposition. The resolution's sponsor Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) said, "A strong relationship with the Kurdish people serves the ideals of peace, stability and democratic governance... the Kurdish part of the country has served as a model for democracy" since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Mr Rohrabacher concluded that the establishment of a consulate in Erbil would "underscore the great friendship between the US and the Kurdish people." He called it a moral and practical resolution.

House Representatives Michael McMahon (Democrat-NY), Ted Poe (Republican-TX) and Lincoln Davis (D-TN) also spoke in favour of the resolution. Congressman Poe said that the Kurds' determination to prevent the persecution they had suffered in the past underlies their desire to work with the US. He added that the Kurds have committed themselves to a future in a federal Iraq, with the aim of improving freedom, security, and human rights.

Mr Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Representative to the US, said, "I would like to thank the co-authors of the resolution and members of the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus who supported it. The establishment of a consulate will broaden and deepen our already strong relationship with America."


House Resolution 873 gives many reasons why a US consulate should be opened in Erbil. It states, "The Kurds of Iraq have been willing partners with the US in the democratic transition in Iraq since 2003 and the Kurdistan Region has served as a model of Iraq's democratization since Operation Iraqi Freedom... the establishment of a United States Consulate in the Kurdistan Region will demonstrate a US commitment to maintaining and building upon the success and stability of this prosperous and democratic Iraqi region".


The resolution also states that a consulate "will both be helpful in attracting greater US business and investment to the region and ensuring that the region continues to serve as a 'gateway' to US business success in other parts of Iraq, as a number of US Government agencies have advocated."

Currently consular and citizen services are only provided by the US Embassy in Baghdad, more than 200 miles away from the safe and secure Kurdistan Region. American citizens and visitors to Kurdistan must travel this distance to receive such services. Establishing a consulate in the regional capital Erbil will increase travel to the Region and encourage more private investment and government and NGO missions to the area.

Seventeen countries, including European nations, have diplomatic representation in Erbil, and this year the US Department of State altered its travel advisory for Iraq to recognise the safety and security of the Kurdistan Region.

See also the full text of [House of Representatives Resolution 873](#)

 [Back](#)

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## KRG-USA Newsletter - June 2010

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Qubad Talabani <qubad.talabani@krg.org>

Tue, Jun 8, 2010 at 10:26 AM

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# KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

U.S. LIAISON OFFICE NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2010

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## HOUSE BACKS CONSULATE IN ERBIL

On May 19 the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling for the establishment of a U.S. consulate in the Kurdistan Region. Approval of this resolution - a key goal of the KRG-U.S. liaison office signals America's continued support for the stability, prosperity and democracy of the Kurdistan Region. Four Congressmen spoke in favor of Resolution 873, which was passed with no opposition. The resolution's sponsor Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) said, "A strong relationship with the Kurdish people serves the ideals of peace, stability and democratic governance... the Kurdish part of the country has served as a model for democracy" since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He said the establishment of a consulate in Erbil would "underscore the great friendship between the U.S. and the Kurdish people." He called it a moral and practical resolution.

The resolution states, "The Kurds of Iraq have been willing partners with the U.S. in the democratic transition in Iraq since 2003 and the Kurdistan Region has served as a model of Iraq's democratization since Operation Iraqi Freedom. The establishment of a U.S. consulate in the Kurdistan Region will demonstrate a U.S. commitment to maintaining and building upon the success and stability of this prosperous and democratic Iraqi region." It notes that a consulate "will both be helpful in attracting greater U.S. business and investment to the region and ensuring that the region continues to serve as a 'gateway' to U.S. business success in other parts of Iraq, as a number of U.S. government agencies have advocated."

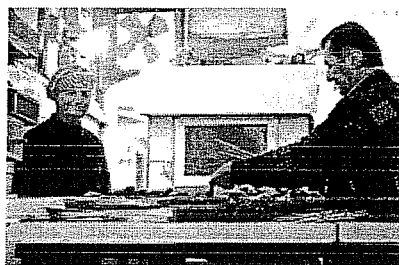
Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Representative to the U.S., said, "I would like to thank the co-authors of the resolution and members of the Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus who supported it." Talabani also paid tribute to the Kurdish-American community for their efforts in meeting with their respective House members and urging them to support the resolution.

1532 16th Street Northwest  
Washington, DC 20036  
Tel: +1.202.797.7575  
Fax: +1.202.821.1870  
[www.knowkurdistan.com](http://www.knowkurdistan.com)  
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## CLOSE UP

Tucked away in a side alley known as Aloy Kon, in the Kani Askan neighborhood of Sulaimani is Ahay Gula. A little gem of a restaurant, Ahay Gula is famous for its mouth watering grilled skewers of liver, kidney, hearts and other parts of lamb most others overlook and discard. There is only one way to enjoy these delectable morsels: get up very early in the morning - because by 9:30 a.m. the restaurant is usually closed as its delicacies are sold out. With laborers, local residents, and others "in the know" Ahay Gula is a true Sulaimani experience that every visitor must try.



## CULTURE

The inaugural Kurdish Culture and History Festival will be held June 29 and 30 at the House of Sweden, 2900 K Street, N.W, in the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C. The two days will feature a variety of lectures and panel discussions on culture, journalism and current affairs as well as irresistible music, food, dance. Contact Najat Abdullah at [ac@krgusa.org](mailto:ac@krgusa.org).

LAPARAY DUAM/PAGE TWO

## DELEGATION VISITS CONTINUE TO KURDISTAN REGION

A delegation from the Foreign Policy Initiative (FPI) spent a week in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, meeting with President Masoud Barzani, high level KRG officials, a number of senior regional and local officials as well as university students, businesspeople, and journalists. Julius D. Krein of FPI said the group received a very warm welcome from everyone they met. "The visit impressed upon the group members the vital importance of continued American engagement in order to ensure the progress

achieved so far and to help build a better future for the people of the region." Members of the delegation wrote several articles about their trip, which can be found at [www.knowkurdistan.com](http://www.knowkurdistan.com).

The visit of FPI - coordinated by Zhala Sabir, director for Congressional and Academic Affairs in the KRG-U.S. liaison office - follows trips to the Kurdistan Region by other foreign policy institutes, such as the Center for New American Security (CNAS) and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).



*Qubad Talabani speaks to Washington's foreign policy community at the Nixon Center.*

## IRAQ ELECTION RESULTS REVIEWED

Appearing before the Nixon Center, Qubad Talabani, the KRG's U.S. representative, urged the Washington foreign policy community to stay engaged in Iraqi issues, despite the new focus on the imminent U.S. troop drawdown and the shift to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. He called on the U.S. administration to exert pressure on Iraq to achieve formation of a new government. "Any further delay could destabilize the region," Talabani said. "There is a long process ahead, and it is unlikely that a perfect Iraq will emerge. But if Iraq can become a relatively democratic, relatively stable, relatively pro-Western country, it could both play a stabilizing role in the region and act as an important and reliable exporter of hydro-carbons."

## CONGRESS

Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barzani received U.S. Reps. Lincoln Davis, Chairman of the Kurdish American Congressional Caucus, and Brian Baird to discuss bilateral relations between the U.S. and the Kurdistan Region. The Congressmen travelled to the Kurdistan Region in recognition and appreciation for the friendship of the people of the Kurdistan Region toward the U.S. government and people.

## CATCHING UP

We welcome Glen Ramson as our newest intern. Glen is from Frederick, Md., and has a BA in Economics from the University of Maryland. Glen is a Masters candidate in Middle Eastern studies at the Elliott School of International Affairs, at George Washington University. We say thanks to outgoing interns Bill Rice and Sabat Mamoud. Bill returns to American University to pursue studies in International Peace and Conflict Resolution while Sabat continues work on her Masters degree in Global Affairs at George Mason University.

The Kurdistan Regional Government Liaison Office – U.S.A. is registered as an agent of the Kurdistan Regional Government under 22 U.S.C. § 611 et seq

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## Invitation - Bedirxan Kurdish Cultural Festival

1 message

KRG-US <us@krg.org>

Mon, Jun 21, 2010 at 4:47 PM

To: Intern <us@krg.org>

Dear Friends,

The Kurdistan Regional Government U.S. Liaison Office cordially invites you to Bedirxan's 7th Festival in Washington, D.C., "From Kurdistan to America: Establishing Cultural Bridges between Kurds and Americans." Attached, please find a detailed event program, featuring authentic Kurdish art, literature, food, dance and panel discussions. The festival will take place June 29 from 12 p.m. to 7 p.m. and June 30 from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the House of Sweden. **Kindly RSVP to [us@krg.org](mailto:us@krg.org) or call 202-821-1860 by Friday, June 25, indicating lunch and/or dinner attendance.**

Best regards,

Kurdistan Regional Government

Representation to the United States

1532 16th St., NW | Washington, DC 20036


(Tel) + 1 202 797 7575 | (Fax) + 1 202 821 1870 | [www.krg.org](http://www.krg.org)

**NOTIFICATION:** The Kurdistan Regional Government Liaison Office – U.S.A. is registered as an agent of the Kurdistan Regional Government under 22 U.S.C. § 611 *et seq.*

**BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL:** Exempt from FOIA please contact KRG-US concerning any request to release any document.

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### 2 attachments

 **Event Program Bedirxan's 7th festival -June 29-30.pdf**  
69K

 **7thBedirxanFestival.pdf**  
637K



## Bedirxan's 7<sup>th</sup> Festival

### “From Kurdistan to America: Establishing Cultural Bridges between Kurds & Americans”

June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 2010

House of Sweden  
2900 K Street NW  
Washington, DC – United States of America

### Festival Program

**Day 1**  
**Tuesday**  
**June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**12:00-2:00PM**

- **Opening Ceremony with Lunch** *Catered by Levante's Restaurant*
  - Opening Remarks by Qubad Talabani, KRG Representative to the U.S.
  - Bedirxan March Song. Lyrics: Jamal Abdul, Music: Anwer Qeredaghi.
  - An introduction to the Bedirxan's by Ms. Sinem Khan Jeladet Ali-Bedirxan and Mr. Hamid Bedirxan
  - Documentary Film “Bedirxan & the Bedirxanis” Producer: Sattar M. Ameen
  - Documentary Film “Mohammed Mehdi Al-Jawahiri” Producer: Sattar M. Ameen
  - Documentary Film “This is Kurdistan” Produced and Directed by Hawraz Muhammad

*Kurdish Art and Literature Exhibitions on display throughout the two-day festival*

**2:00-3:00 PM Panel 1: Language and Literature in Kurdistan**

- **Moderator: Dr. Ismael Mohammedfahmi Saeed**
- **Dr. Azad Hamad Sharif** - *The impact of Kurdish history on literature- drawing comparisons from Jean Sasson's Love in a Torn Land*
  - Dr. Sharif is a senior lecturer of English and American literature at the University of Salahadin.
- **Jean Sasson** – *Kurdistan and Love in a Torn Land*
  - Jean Sasson is an American author who has written extensively about women in the Middle East.
- **Dr. Ismael Mohammedfahmi Qaradaghi** - *The influence of American literature on Kurdish literature*
  - Dr. Qaradaghi is an assistant professor of literature at the University of Salahadin.

- Question and Answer Session

### **Coffee / Tea Break**

#### **3:15-4:15PM Panel 2: Culture, Art, and Women**

- **Moderator: Ms. Sinem Khan Jeladet Bedirxan**
- **Shahla Taheer Al-Haydari**
  - Shahla Haydari is a researcher in history from Baghdad.
- **Behar Mustafa (Sweden)**
  - Behar Mustafa is a sociologist from Sulaimani.
- **Mrs. Taman Shaker (Germany)**
- Question and Answer Session

### **Coffee / Tea Break**

#### **4:30-5:30PM Panel 3: The History of Kurds in Kirkuk**

- **Moderator: Dr. Ismael Qaradaghi**
- **Dr. Kemal Mezher Ahmed** - Some Notes on Kirkuk and Adjacent Areas along with the screening of a documentary film, "Kirkuk"
  - Dr. Ahmed is a writer, translator, and a member of the Kurdish Academy of Language.
- **Dr. Cebar Qader (Holland)** - Kirkuk's Ethnic Mosaic
  - Dr. Qader is a consultant to the Prime Minister Dr. Barham Salih for higher education.
- **Dr. Ako Shwani** - History of the Kurdish People
  - Dr. Shwani is a professor at Sulaimani University.
- Question and Answer Session

### **Coffee / Tea Break**

#### **5:45-7:00PM**

- **Screening of "Herman" a Kurdish feature film directed by Hassan Hussein, produced by the Ministry of Culture & Youth**
  - Two lovers, Herman and Adar, are separated by the Iraqi government's Anfal campaign that massacred and suppressed the Kurdish people. While Herman struggles to find Adar, she must deal with the realities of being unmarried and pregnant and the implications to her family's honor.

**Day 2**  
**Wednesday**  
**June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010**

**1:00-1:15PM**

- **Introductory remarks by Najat Abdullah**, Director of Art and Culture
- **Traditional dancing by a Virginia based Kurdish dance group**

**Coffee/ Tea Break**

**1:30-3:00PM Panel 4: Cultural Identity and the Kurdish People**

- **Moderator: Dr. Azad Hamad Sharif.**
- **Atta Faeq** - The impact of other cultures on Kurdish culture
  - Mr. Faeq is a writer, intellectual and English language specialist.
- **Dr. Sarwar Abdullah (Germany)** - The trajectory of Kurdish cultural identity
  - Dr. Abdullah has a Ph.D. in Arabic literature and literary criticism.
- **Hashmi Ahmedzade (Britain)** - Four Narrations and an "Imagined Community"
  - Mr Ahmedzade is an instructor at Exeter University.
- **Dr. Narmin Ali** - Archaeology in Kurdistan
  - Dr. Ali is a professor of archaeology at the University of Salahadin specializing in the preservation of historical sites.
- **Question and Answer Session**

**Coffee/ Tea Break**

**3:15-4:15PM Panel 5: Kurdish Film**

- **Hawraz Mohammed Hama Rasheed** - The Kurds and Cinema
  - Mr. Rasheed is a director of short films and documentaries.
- **Kurdish Documentary Short Film Presentation.**
  - These short films are on various topics concerning Kurdistan and the Kurdish people.

**Coffee/ Tea Break**

**4:30- 5:00 PM**

- **"Mom" A Monodrama by Sarkaut Taro**
  - Mr. Taro has been acting and performing for over 30 years and has directed two films, "Qaraj" (1991) and "Zamely Garman" (1994).

---

**5:00-6:00PM**

- **"Winterland" A short film by Hisham Zamani**

The director humorously depicts the story of Renas, a Kurdish refugee who lives in a remote area in Northern Norway. He has everything he wants, but deeply misses a woman.

**7:00-9:00 PM Closing Ceremony and Reception**

- Remarks by Mr. Hameed Bedirxan, Director General of Bedirxan Publishing House
- Poetry Recitation by Qubadi Jali Zade, Dilshad Abdullah and a Sami Hadi poem read by Dr. Ismael Qaradaghi
- Distribution of the Bedirxan Festival Award.
- Closing Remarks by Qubad Talabani

*Live Music Performance by a Kurdish youth band*

**Bedirxan Publishing House in Profile:**

The Bedirxan family was the first to establish a Kurdish newspaper, called "Kurdistan," published in the Latin alphabet. The paper was headquartered in Cairo, Egypt. The Bedirxan Publishing House was established in Sulaimani in 2000 and was the first independent publishing house founded after the Kurdish uprising of 1991.

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**Director for Art and Culture**  
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